



Bob Inzer

Clerk of Circuit Court

Clerk of Courts ▪ Clerk of County Commission ▪ Auditor ▪ Treasurer ▪ Recorder ▪ Custodian of County Funds

Attachment # 7

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September 28, 2004

The Honorable Jane Sauls, Chairman
Leon County Board of County Commissioners
301 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Chairman Sauls:

The Board of County Commission will be asked to approve a relocation and renovation plan for the Courthouse and the Bank of America Building. I am writing in support of the proposed plan and the funding associated therewith. I know the dollars associated with this plan are greater than the Commission may have expected and, candidly, are much greater than what I anticipated. I do not have a background associated with commercial renovation; therefore, I am not able to defend the cost estimates. What I can defend are the planned improvements.

Conceptually, the plan is consistent with the structure most other urban counties have adopted. The courthouse is used for court-related functions and non-court functions are provided in a county administration building. The plan provides for an efficient migration of non-court related functions from the courthouse to the Bank of America building. Secondly, it allocates space in recognition of the future growth of the county and the related increases in demand for services. This will mitigate the need for future moves or bifurcation of services.

The Clerk's court operations are currently located on three floors in the courthouse and two floors on Thomasville Road. This structure is terribly inefficient and provides poor customer service. Citizens do not know where to go to find services and are often required to get back into their cars to go to a separate location in order to get service. Even within the courthouse, citizens entering the building are often confused and serviced off of back hallways instead of being provided court services at a single location on the rotunda or a major hallway.

The plan as proposed would service citizens from the first floor rotunda. The Clerk's office is the largest source of foot traffic. Said another way, more citizens visit the Clerk's office than any other county or constitutional office, with the judiciary being second. Businesses generally determine office location by the number of customer visits and the need of their customers. It is for this reason, that most clerk offices are located on the ground floor of the courthouse.

As I have stated previously, it is my intent to reorganize the court-related functions completely. Historically, the Clerk's office has been structured around funding sources. The County was responsible for funding county court; circuit court, from both public fees and court-related fees. Under Article V, county funding responsibilities

are greatly reduced and there is no longer any difference in funding sources between county and circuit court. While the existing office structure was necessary for capturing costs and associating them with funding sources, it is an inefficient model in the delivery of services.

Under Article V, my court-related budget increased by only three percent or an amount approximately equal to the increase in health care costs. For our office to continue to meet the increasing needs associated with growth and additional customer demand, we have to become more efficient.

Our proposed organizational model is one where all functions are co-located and no longer will we be structured around court divisions. We plan to have a single place where all court filings and court revenues are received and recorded. All employees that attend court will also be in one division and co-located. Citizens seeking court records, pro se assistance, or other customer services will be directed and handled in a single location.

Restructuring of our court functions will improve customer service, but equally as important, will also allow us to become more efficient. Employees are currently divided into eight different court divisions. As you may expect, workload demands within each of these divisions is not constant. There are weeks where there are no trials associated with some divisions and other weeks where there are multiple trials. We are able to cross-train and relocate employees to meet interim demand. But we are limited to the extent we can do this. We believe that through relocation and restructuring, we will be able to eliminate eight to ten positions and \$300,000-\$400,000 annually in payroll.

Court records are currently located in all divisions and are not secure. As we watched what happened in Escambia County and other counties hit with a direct hit of their courthouse, we realized how vulnerable we are. Windows were blown out and court files were destroyed. The vault, currently located on the first floor, provides an excellent location for securing court records. It has poured walls and steel shutters that can be closed in the event of a major storm. The plan as proposed is to stop using this for office space and to maximize use to secure court files.

Many of our closed files are currently stored in a sheet metal building on the perimeter of the city. The windstorm rating on this building is likely to be less than 100 miles per hour. It does not meet state standards with respect to windstorm, humidity, temperature or security. While these are closed case files, we are currently averaging 600 file pulls a month from this facility for re-openings, subsequent filings or copies. Providing space for these records that meets state standards continues to be a county responsibility. The plan will allow us to move most of our more commonly requested files from this facility to the basement of the annex. While it may not technically meet all of the state standards, it will provide windstorm protection, which is our greatest threat.

I recognize the County has enormous demands for services and limited resources. Dollars spent on renovating the courthouse are not available for other facilities or services. I also recognize that the Board has not seen a prior budget for renovation of the courthouse and may be surprised by the amount. While my experience is limited, it appears that this budget is higher than it should have been because of prior delays and efforts to minimize then-current costs, which reminds me of the Fram Oil Filter commercial: "Pay me now or pay me later."

Good long-term decisions, while painful in the short-run, pay dividends in the long run. Instead of viewing this as an expense, I hope the Commission will view this as an investment where the

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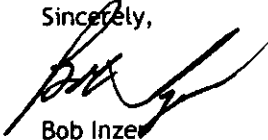
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dividends are improved customer service and efficiency. And I assure the Commission that I will work with your staff and architect to minimize actual costs.

At this time, there are no specific space plans developed. Primarily, we are requesting open office space and the removal of existing interior walls. We are moving and reusing existing cubicles and office furniture. To the extent we can work around some of the existing office walls without impairing efficiency, we will. I believe the plan will service the needs of our office and our citizens for many years to come.

I look forward to working with the County Commission and stand ready to answer any questions, you may have.

Sincerely,



Bob Inzer
Clerk of the Circuit Court

BI/cam

cc: The Honorable Judge Charles Francis, Chief Judge
The Honorable Tony Grippa, Commissioner
The Honorable Cliff Thaell, Commissioner
The Honorable Bill Proctor, Commissioner
The Honorable Rudy Maloy, Commissioner
The Honorable Dan Winchester, Commissioner
The Honorable Bob Rackleff, Commissioner
The Honorable Bert Hartsfield, Property Appraiser
The Honorable Doris Maloy, Tax Collector
The Honorable Ion Sancho, Supervisor of Elections
Mr. Parwez Alam, County Administrator
Mr. Grant Slayden, Court Administrator